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ADDRESS
of
GENERAL THOMAS EWING
at the
CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION
at
MARIETTA, OHIO, JULY 15TH, 1888,
of the
SETTLEMENT OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORY.

(SECOND EDITION.)

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This address is published for the Woman's Centennial Association of Marietta, Ohio, and is offered for sale by it for the benefit of a Pioneer Memorial Fund, at 25 cents per copy. The Fund is to be applied toward the construction of a monument or other memorial of the patriotic men and women whose services and sacrifices in the cause of liberty are so beautifully and feelingly portrayed in the address. Contributions to the Fund and orders for the address are earnestly solicited and may be sent to either of the undersigned, at Marietta, O.

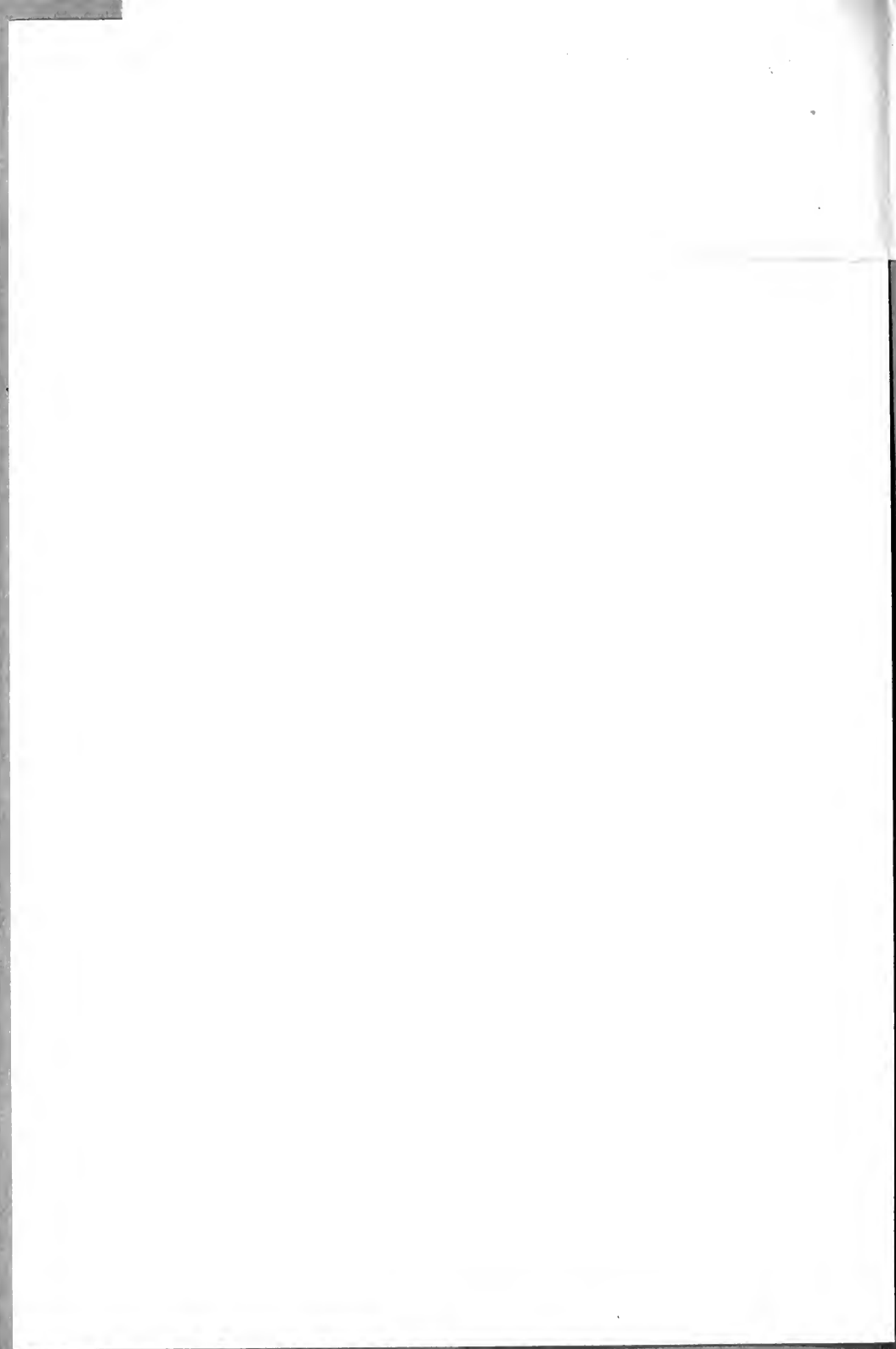
MARY C. NYE,
SOPHIA D. DALE.

Oct. 1888.

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With compliments of

THOMAS EWING



ADDRESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

In this centennial celebration of the first settlement of the North-West Territory, and the establishment of civil government therein, to-day has been set apart for special commemoration of the pioneers by their descendants. As a grandson of George Ewing, who was one of the early settlers, and, like almost all of them, a soldier of the Revolution, I have the honor and pleasure to preside on this occasion.

We assemble here with the representatives of the commonwealths of Virginia and New York, who gave the North-West Territory to the Republic, and of those young and powerful states formed of it, to commemorate the glorious and beneficent event. But many of us come with more than the general interest of American patriots in the occasion. We are the descendants of that immortal band through whose enterprise, statesmanship and love of their fellow-man this wilderness was settled, and the foundations of freedom in the new Republic laid. A hundred years ago, in block-houses and stockades built on yonder plain where the lovely Muskingum pours her floods to the still more beautiful Ohio, our fathers and mothers lived in the forest ; tilled their patches of corn ; fed their cows ; hunted game, and marched in procession each Sunday to church, in armed and incessant preparation against the savage. Their mutual loves, trusts, sorrows, sacrifices, and all the noble passions born of common trials bravely met, have vanished from earth, but have purified and strengthened them for a nobler life above.

With what happiness do they not look down to-day on their descendants assembled here in proud and loving remembrance of their deeds? On the hundreds of thousands scattered over the Republic who are honored in being known as their kinsmen? On the great plain of forest and prairie bounded by the Ohio, the Mississippi and the Lakes, which, when they settled here, was inhabited only by wandering savages, and which now comprises the homes and temples of thirteen millions of people, in five great states as prosperous, intelligent and humane as any on earth—the earliest daughters of the Republic—the first states planted in the soil of American liberty, and ripened in its sun.

All peoples celebrate those events of their national life which most strongly illustrate their character and gratify their pride and aspirations. Among the notable events of American history from Columbus to Lincoln, I know of none which more deserves general and perpetual commemoration than this. I include of course not only the migration of our forefathers to “the Ohio Country,” but also the great charter of freedom which they caused to be enacted, as a condition precedent of their settlement, and bore with them as the ark of the covenant to the promised land.

Thitherto our settlements—along the northern lines where they were resisted by the savages—had pushed westward cautiously, hugging the frontier; creeping like an infant close to its mother’s knees. This was the first stride of population; the first wave of the great tide, hitherto unexampled in human history, which rose, and surged, and swept on across the continent. That ambition and high spirit of adventure; that noble discontent with mean and cramped environments; that longing and struggling for larger opportunities, and higher fields of action, which are now characteristics of the American people, have had their

opportunities and their consequent growth in the migrations among which this stands pre-eminent.

The Alleghanies and the great rivers were barriers, high and deep, between the old states and the North-West Territory, which the tomahawk of the savage guarded from individual settlement. The war-like Shawnees, Wyandots and Ottawas, who had been fighting the colonies for thirty years—in the pay of the French before the Revolution, and in that of the British during and after it—were still armed and hostile. Great Britain had signed a treaty of peace at Versailles in 1783, in which, after long resistance and with great reluctance, she recognized our claims to the North-West Territory. But this concession was mortifying to the ruling classes in England, and caused the downfall of Lord Shelburne's Cabinet which made the treaty. A resolution of censure was voted by the Commons—Lord North, who led the opposition, declaring that “the ministry should have retained for Canada all the country north and west of the Ohio.” The resolution was adopted by the Lords after a debate which attracted the largest assemblage of Peers of the reign of George III—in which debate the complaint was that Lord Shelburne “had given up the banks of the Ohio, the paradise of America.” The Coalition Cabinet, led by Fox and Lord North, which followed, and the succeeding ministries, resorted to every artifice and subterfuge to retain the territory. In open violation of the treaty, they still held and garrisoned all the western forts, where the hostile savages always found sympathy and support. They went so far as to build and strongly garrison a new fort, called Fort Miami, where the town of Perrysburg, Ohio, now stands. Early in 1794 Lord Dorchester, having just arrived from London, addressed an Indian Council on the Maumee, and predicted an early renewal of hostilities between Great

Britain and the United States. Thereupon Congress laid an embargo on all British vessels; and the House passed a joint resolution of non intercourse with Great Britain until she should abandon the western forts, which was defeated in the Senate by the casting vote of Vice-President Adams. The Confederation was too poor and dispirited—and too much distracted by rival claims to the territory set up by New York and Virginia—to conquer the savages and expel the British. Gen'l William Henry Harrison once said that the Revolutionary War was not over until August 20th, 1794—six years after the settlement at Marietta—when “Mad Anthony” Wayne, under the eyes and guns of the garrison at Fort Miami, crushed the savages and extinguished the hopes of their British allies.

Throughout the five years from the close of the Revolution to the settlement at Marietta, the dominion of the North-West had been thus drifting away from the feeble, discordant, ungoverned Confederacy. To save it from being lost to the new Republic, it was indispensable that Virginia and New York should surrender their claims to its ownership. This they did in due time and with lofty generosity and patriotism. It was then necessary that the Confederation at once sell lands to agricultural and semi-military colonies, and pass a law for the government of the territory. This it did by its contract with the Ohio Company; and by the Ordinance of 1787—both acts being passed in July of that year.

This legislation was obtained only by the patient and persistent efforts of leading members of the Ohio Company, aided by the constant and powerful influence of Washington. Their efforts began at Newburgh on the Hudson in 1783, when our army lay in its encampment there awaiting the conclusion of peace. A petition to the Continental Congress was prepared

and signed by 283 officers and enlisted men, setting forth the necessity of taking the territory out of the possession and control of Great Britain, and expressing the desire of the petitioners to receive their arrears of pay in parcels of land comprising a compact and fertile body to be selected and set apart for settlement by them.

The petitioners were generally poor. After eight years of service away from their homes, their businesses were closed against them. To the loss of aptitude and opportunity for civil pursuits, which are the common and heavy penalties for patriotic service in the army, were added the exhaustion of private resources through the almost worthlessness of the money in which they were paid, and finally the failure to pay them at all. They were bound to each other by memories of their long and eventful military career, by a common love of adventure, and a desire, as they had to begin life anew, to begin it in the new country and in a settlement of soldiers who, inured to hardships and familiar with dangers, could take care of themselves. This petition to Congress was intrusted to their beloved commander--to him towards whom, throughout the long night of the Revolution, all eyes had turned as to that northern star,

“ Of whose true-fixed, and resting quality,
There is no fellow in the firmament.”

Washington urgently pressed their petition on the attention of the Continental Congress, then sitting at Princeton. No action was taken. He presented and urged it again to the Congress when sitting at Annapolis. Still even *his* appeals failed to arouse that body to a sense of the justice and sound policy of the proposed legislation. I have heard my father say that Mr. Webster once showed him a pamphlet published at

Salem, Mass., in 1786, which set forth in glowing and truthful terms the attractive character of "the Ohio Country," and the necessity of taking prompt possession of it by a semi-military colony. It described the splendid rivers and lakes which bounded the territory, and distinctly prophesied that ere long steam would be applied to navigation upon them. The pamphlet was anonymous, but Mr. Webster said its putative author was Dr. Manassah Cutler, to whose keen intellect and ready tongue and pen the company was indebted for the legislation which gave it success. It was prepared, no doubt, after General Tupper's tour to the west, in the fall of '85, and about the date of the organization of the Ohio Company at the "Bunch of Grapes Tavern," in Boston, March 1st, 1786. It was only by means of such efforts and influences, protracted through four years, that the Continental Congress was sufficiently aroused to the importance of holding and occupying the North-West Territory, to give the pioneers the legislation indispensable to their great undertaking.

This legislation having been obtained, a bold act by the Ohio Company—a bugle call—was needed to command the attention of the American people and demonstrate at once the practicability and the method of settlement here. Such an act was the march of Putnam's band from Massachusetts to Marietta, commencing at Danvers, early in December, 1787, and ending on this spot, April 7th, 1788. The physical difficulties to be overcome on the way, and the dangers attending the settlement, would have appalled any but the hardest of men impelled by a great and unselfish purpose. Many large rivers had to be crossed, dense forests traversed, and pathless mountains covered with snow, where no wheeled vehicle could be moved and no supplies obtained; and the colony had to settle down in the wilderness beyond the mountains and the great river,

there to support itself by agriculture, surrounded by armed and hostile savages who were incited to violence by the British garrisons, with no reserved resources, and with a mere semblance of a government five hundred miles away, too poor and inert to help it even in the direst extremity.

Putnam's daring and successful expedition excited the wonder and admiration of the country. It dispelled the fears which had enveloped the unknown. It called back to the landless people of the states, cursed by monopoly under large grants from kings and lords proprietors, to come west and own homes and govern themselves, in the glorious expanse which belonged to all the American people. New Jersey heard the call, and Symmes followed in the same year with his colony to the Miamis. Virginia heard it, and her patriot soldiers eagerly took possession of the lands between the Scioto and the Little Miami, reserved for them in the act of cession. The impoverished soldiers of the other colonies came flocking; and thus the veterans of all the thirteen states, who had together shed their blood on the battlefields of the Revolution, again commingled it in the generations which have since given Ohio her proud pre-eminence. O, glorious state! O, nobly born! If there be a state of the Union which may boast of the pre-eminence of her soldiers and statesmen for a generation gone by, without offense to her sisters, surely Ohio may. For is she not the first born of the Republic; of the blood of heroes from all the colonies; the first typical, composite, American state? And were not the children of these heroes born poor; strengthened in mind and body by strenuous effort; reared in communities cursed by neither rank, luxury nor hopeless poverty; under a government devoted to freedom, intelligence and christian morality; and in a new land so blest in sky, soil and waters as to seem to have

been specially fitted by the Almighty for the highest development of man.

Probably no large migrations of men occur without a special Divine purpose and direction. The exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt was visibly and audibly under God's guidance as a preparation for the Messiah. The hordes of Goths and Visi-goths, whom the populous north

“ Poured from her frozen loins to pass
Rhene or the Danaw,”

were sent to invigorate the effeminate Latin races they subdued, by the admixture of hardier blood. The Crusaders, though they failed in the pious and ambitious aims of centuries of struggle, brought back from the seats of civilization on the Mediterranean a knowledge of mathematics, literature, and song, which civilized and softened our savage ancestors. The landing on Plymouth Rock of a band of that stern and God-fearing democracy who smote the first Charles and were smitten by the second, fore-ordained the separation of the colonies from the crown. None of these migrations, save that of the Israelites, was more surely under divine guidance than this, or was followed by more beneficent and far-reaching results. In this movement the Divine purpose apparently was to open the interior of this almost unoccupied continent to settlement by the oppressed and hardy poor, not only of the colonies, but also of Europe, where each family could dwell under its own vine and fig-tree; to found states, for the first time in human history, in that liberty and equality for which Sidney died, and which Jefferson proclaimed in the declaration of independence; and through the influence of such new states to establish freedom and equal rights throughout the Republic, and in time throughout the world.

The curse of land monopoly had blighted most of the colonies. The grants to the Duke of York, Lord Delawarr, Lord Baltimore, Lord Fairfax and others, covered vast domains of the best lands which had been sold by them generally in great tracts to wealthy holders. The evil of large holdings was being fostered and perpetuated in many states by laws of primogeniture and entail, and by limiting suffrage and offices to land owners, thus establishing, as far as practicable, a landed aristocracy.

A second curse was slavery—the twin and ally of land monopoly; both operating to degrade labor; both repelling immigration of poor white men; both enemies of democratic-republican government. In the heat of the struggle for independence, the thirteen revolted colonies, except Rhode Island and Connecticut, abolished their royal charters and formed state governments. One would expect to find in these battle-born constitutions broad and effectual declarations of human rights. Yet in not one of them is slavery forbidden. In the constitution of Delaware alone was the slave-trade, or the introduction of slaves from other states, prohibited. In the Federal Constitution, which was being formed by a convention at Philadelphia when the Ordinance of '87 was enacted by the congress in New York, every clause which touched the institution of slavery was intended to protect and strengthen it—the clause for the restoration of fugitive slaves—for preventing the prohibition of the African slave-trade prior to 1808—and for increased representation in congress to slave-holding communities in proportion to the number of their slaves. In the original draft of the declaration of independence, one count of the indictment against the Crown was that it had fastened slavery on the colonies, but that count was afterwards stricken out as not constituting a grievance. The slave-

trade which British greed had established was carried on after the revolutionary war under the American flag in ships sailing from northern ports; and it was by northern votes in the constitutional convention that the traffic was protected until 1808. That was a hard saying of Judge Taney in the Dred Scott case that in the opinion of those who formed and ratified the Federal Constitution, "black men had no rights which white men were bound to respect." It shocked, and angered the North, and was generally denounced as untrue. The declaration was too broad, but if limited to the great majority of the people, it was true. There were among our forefathers many political disciples of Milton, Russell and Algernon Sidney,—who worshipped Liberty and were ready to die in her cause. Of such were the men of the Ohio Company. But while we recollect their love of liberty, and remember too how Jefferson, looking at slavery in the colonies and the slave-trade between them, exclaimed—"I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just,"—we are painfully aware of the fact that a large majority of the American press, and public men, and people,—North and South alike,—saw nothing to condemn in African slavery. In fact it was forbidden nowhere in christendom, and every commercial nation was engaged in the inhuman traffic.

The general lack of the vital flame of democracy in the Confederation is further illustrated by the fact that, in only four of the states—Virginia, New York, North Carolina and Rhode Island,—was there absolute freedom of religious opinion. In but three,—New Hampshire, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania—was there provision for common schools; and in less than half of the eleven new state constitutions are to be found bills of rights containing the *habeas corpus* and other safeguards of liberty.

From a Congress representing states the most of which were so deficient in republican life, so wedded to slavery and land monopoly, so out of chord with the declaration of independence, the forecast and determination of the Ohio Company, rising high above the interests and political morality of the day, secured the enactment of the Ordinance of '87, and the needed legislation for sales of the public lands in small parcels, with liberal reservations for schools and colleges.

The ordinance of '87, for which the world is indebted so largely to the Marietta Colony, stands pre - eminent among free institutions of government. All the fundamental propositions of civil and religious liberty, now recognized as the American Magna Charta, are declared therein, not merely for the government of the territory, but also of the five states to be formed therein ; and for a perpetual covenant between those states and all of their sisters, present or to come. These guarantees found no place in the federal constitution until four years after the passage of the ordinance, when they were incorporated among the first two amendments. It is worthy of special note that in that ordinance the union of the states is declared to be forever indissoluble. The omission of a similar provision from the constitution of the United States --an omission believed to have been necessary to effect its ratification--left the door ajar for secession, and contributed largely to the great rebellion.

The limitless expanse of rich lands in the west open to purchase from the government at low prices, on long credit, and in small parcels, attracted the hardy and homeless sons and daughters of toil from the original states and from all northern and central Europe. The tide of migration, after covering Ohio, swept on to the Wabash, to the Mississippi, to the farthest shores of the Lakes, until each of the five

states of the northwest took her constitutional liberties from the Ordinance, as she set her star in the blue field of the Union. Still onward the tide of migration swept—beyond the Mississippi to the Missouri; over the Missouri to the fabled American Desert; across the so-called desert to the Rocky Mountains; over the Rockies to the Sierras; and down the Sierras to the sea, until eight more states had followed the example of the five formed out of the North-West Territory. And at last the constitutions of all the once slave states, and the federal constitution itself, have adopted from that ordinance the first words of prohibition of human slavery ever enacted into law—the most beneficent and imperishable sentence in our annals—which, from the day of its insertion in the Ordinance of '87, tolled the knell of slavery throughout the world: “There shall be neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, otherwise than in punishment of crimes whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.”

The Marietta Colony were thus in a large sense the emancipators of the slaves, and the architects of the Republic. They led into the union thirteen states free born; which never wore the collar of colonial subjection, or bred a slave, or had a religious, land or money qualification for office or suffrage; where men owned their own homes and tilled their own fields; where labor was blessed and honored; states which when the gauge of battle was flung down by slavery, welcomed the fight with an enthusiasm which swept all before it, and, by destroying slavery, made the Republic free, fraternal and perpetual.

Sir Archibald Alison, in his “Principles of Population,” printed in 1840, speaks with wonder and admiration of the migration on our western frontier,—a vast army of occupation, moving resistlessly, with a front of a thousand miles, one flank resting on the

lakes, the other on the gulf, and making an average progress of 17 miles per year; the advance column felling the forest, building cabins and farming roughly, while behind them followed another column of more wealthy settlers, to buy out the pioneers and complete the work of agricultural improvement. He says nothing like this has been known in the history of man; and he fails to see what is "the impelling force." Had he reflected that these men, whether coming from the older States or from Europe, had almost all been tenants and paid rent for their homes and for the right to till the soil; and that here under our generous and beneficent policy each settler had his choice of land for a home out of millions of acres, under a government deriving all its powers from the settlers themselves, he need not have searched further for "the impelling force" which sent wave after wave over the Atlantic and the Alleghanies, to spread to the Pacific.

The lives of many of the pioneers have been published, and others may still be told from family records and traditions. They were men such as rarely, if ever, united in so small a community. A large proportion of them had received a collegiate education. Among them were very many officers of the Revolution; some of high rank and distinction who enjoyed the personal friendship and confidence of Washington; and without known exception they were men of probity and courage. In this large audience are many of their descendants who it is expected will contribute to the story of their trials, sufferings and joys. For myself, I have but a few words to say of my grand-parents who were among the early settlers here.

Broken in fortune by a military service which extended from the campaign against Quebec, a year before the declaration of independence, to the close of the war of the revolution, Lieut. George Ewing removed with his family from Cumberland County, New Jersey, to West Liberty, in "the pan-handle" of Virginia, where he made a temporary home in 1787—a year before the first settlement at Marietta. Here my father, Thomas Ewing, was born, Dec. 28, 1789. Three years later my grand-parents with their seven children and all their worldly possessions floated down in dug-outs to Marietta, where they were assigned quarters in one of the block-houses on Campus Martius. They soon after joined a colony which built and occupied the stockade at the mouth of Olive Green creek, on the Muskingum, a mile or two above where the pretty town of Beverly now stands. I once visited the grave-yard of that little garrison, and read this inscription carved by my grandfather on a sand stone which he erected over the body of one of his comrades: "Here lies the body of Abel Sherman, who fell by the hand of the savage, August 23, 1792." My grandfather kept a full and interesting journal throughout the revolutionary war, half of which was lost at the Pension Office, and the other half is one of the priceless treasures of our family; but his diary ended with his military service, and he left not a line about his life in the stockades at Marietta and Olive Green. In 1798 he removed from the Muskingum to Ames township, in Athens county, where he opened a farm eight miles from any neighbors.

My father used to tell that in 1805, when he was a lad of about 16, he was at work in his father's corn-field one evening, and was hailed by a well-mounted gentleman who wished to be entertained all night. Father, with prompt hospitality,

took his horse, and showed him into the cabin, but was distressed to find that grandfather treated him with marked coldness. Next morning, as the stranger rode off on the bridle path towards Marietta, grandfather said with great feeling, that that man was Aaron Burr, who slew Alexander Hamilton. Burr was then prosecuting the schemes for which soon after he and Blennerhasset were indicted for treason. Father recollected his sprightly conversation, which Grandfather's coldness could not chill. He also remembered seeing, when a boy, the lovely and unfortunate Mrs. Blennerhasset, on the main street in Marietta, riding a spirited and gaily caparisoned horse. She was dressed in a scarlet riding habit, with an ostrich plume in her hat—a vision of beauty to this child of the forest. She had ridden to town from her magnificent island home near by, to do some shopping.

In looking over the published biographies of the first settlers of Marietta, I find next to nothing about the pioneer women, whose exposures and perils called for the highest courage and sacrifice. The men were generally veterans of the army, accustomed to personal danger and exposure, and rarely shaken by alarms. The women came from comfortable homes, and braved not only long and exhausting journeys with their children, but also the perils and the appalling terrors of the savage. The men built the cabins; but the women made the homes.

“ And a charm o'er each scene of the wilderness threw
More sweet than the noise of its fountains.”

When a boy, I often heard from the now silent lips of women of that era—from the accomplished and charming Mrs. General Goddard, of Zanesville, Mrs. King, of Lancaster, Mrs. Morgan, of Champaign county, and from my father's sisters—tales of heroism of Ohio

women which seemed to me loftier and finer than any of the published tales of the frontier. I have a letter from a kinswoman in Westfield, N. J., telling me of a trip made to Cumberland county, in that state, in the year 1790, by a woman from the border of the Northwest Territory, who came there after a long absence on a last visit to her aged father and mother. She was the wife of a soldier of the Revolution who had emigrated to the far west after the war ended. She had made the long journey from the Ohio, over river and mountain, by flood and fell, through an almost trackless wilderness, on horseback, unattended, carrying a boy baby in her arms. No man ever boasted of his lineage with loftier pride than I, when I say that that brave and loving woman was my grandmother, and the baby my father.

Doubtless there are hundreds of like instances of dauntless love among the pioneer women of Ohio, worthy to become historic. Must the memory of their courage and sacrifices perish, because displayed only by women and in the forest? And, as men have neglected the theme, are there not brilliant women among their descendants to rescue from oblivion some of these true tales of the border?

And now, my friends, on this spot, hallowed by the struggles and achievements of our forefathers, let us resolve to cherish and hand down the precious memory of their courage and fidelity to freedom. May God forever bless Ohio, and all her sisters, and the imperishable Union of the States. May He grant that, ere another centennial be celebrated here, this Republic will have led the World by its silent and shining example to that blessed consummation when every dynasty shall be dethroned, when every army shall be disbanded, and when every people shall rule themselves.

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